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Guest Editorial

Citation for published version:

Morris, N, Penrose, J, Shortt, N, Withers, C, Woodhouse, I & Edinburgh Geography Centenary, C 2008, 'Guest Editorial', *Scottish Geographical Journal*, vol. 124, no. 2-3, pp. 101-102.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14702540802411816>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1080/14702540802411816](https://doi.org/10.1080/14702540802411816)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Scottish Geographical Journal

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This is the author's final draft or 'post-print' version as submitted for publication. The final version was published in *Scottish Geographical Journal* by Taylor & Francis (2008)

Cite As: Morris, N, Penrose, J, Shortt, N, Withers, C, Woodhouse, I & Edinburgh Geography Centenary, C 2008, 'Guest Editorial' *Scottish Geographical Journal*, vol 124, no. 2-3, pp. 101-102.

DOI: 10.1080/14702540802411816

Guest Editorial- Geography's Hundred: A Special Issue to Mark the Centenary of Geography at the University of Edinburgh, 1908–2008

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This special issue of the *Scottish Geographical Journal* has been produced to mark the centenary of the formal establishment of the Department of Geography at the University of Edinburgh in October 1908. Geography has been taught at Edinburgh in one guise or another since the University's foundation in 1583. But the creation of the Department and of a teaching programme under George Goudie Chisholm was a new departure for the University and a milestone in the promotion of geography in Scotland and in Britain. It is fitting that acknowledgement of this event in the form of these papers should take place within the pages of the journal of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society since that body did much in the later nineteenth century to promote the subject in Scotland's schools and universities, and it continues to do so. We are grateful to the journal's editors, Dr Jim Hansom and Dr Jo Sharp, for the invitation to bring forward this Centenary Issue of SGJ and for their patience and courteous guidance as this invitation began to be realised in material form.

It is not easy to know how to mark a centenary. Some of the reasons why this is so, for Edinburgh and more generally, are spelt out in the opening essay in this collection. In our thinking as a Centenary Committee and in relation to other events being planned, we came early to the view that we wanted to afford a balance between reflection upon Edinburgh's history and recognition of the present work being done, and to point to the future nature of Edinburgh Geography. We were keen too to involve former staff and students. To this end, we approached a former Edinburgh student, himself a lifelong and distinguished geographer, Dr Jeffrey Stone, now retired from the University of Aberdeen's Department of Geography, to ask him to coordinate some student recollections of his and others' Edinburgh experience. The choice of Jeff Stone was deliberate: as a graduate of the 1958 class, Jeff stood, as it were,

halfway through our 100 years and was, moreover, part of the cohort that first experienced the effect, from year one to graduation, of Professor Wreford Watson's appointment to the Edinburgh Department. We hoped to get some insight into a history in progress and at a significant moment: Jeff kindly agreed to solicit some responses from amongst his 1958 peers and we are delighted to have these recollections here. Two former staff were also invited to offer their reflections – without restriction as to content or emphasis – and we are likewise pleased to secure the views of Dr Sandy Crosbie and Dr Lyn Collins on a department and intellectual community they did much to shape.

Consideration of the range and quality of the work done by contemporary colleagues was easier, at least in principle, since we knew who amongst our colleagues was doing what. But whilst providing celebratory space for everyone might be democratic, it was not practicable. The papers by Jane Jacobs, Andy Shepherd and Michael Summerfield and their respective co-authors point, simply, to selected themes in Edinburgh Geography; in urban and cultural geography, in polar science and in cosmogenic dating in long-term geomorphology. The fact that colleagues used the invitation to write with others in other departments, in and outwith Edinburgh, says something too about the intellectual networks and international collaboration in which Edinburgh is engaged.

In looking to future geographies, to the profile of future geographers, we wanted to afford space for younger career scholars. Each of the authors of the six shorter summary papers was a final-year PhD candidate when the invitation was made to write a summary review of their doctoral research: all have now moved on to other things. There will, of course, be many other new directions in possible future geographies: our intention here was to be illustrative not exclusive.

In sum, these papers don't "represent" Edinburgh Geography, then, now, or in the future. But they are intended in a small way to help mark a history which, unless it is recalled and made the subject of appropriate enquiry, may be devalued, forgotten, even lost. We are happy to acknowledge the support and comments of the referees for the several papers, to recognise with thanks the work of these and other colleagues, notably Shiela Wilson and Robert Groves and to thank Eduardo Serafin for his assistance with the provision of some of the illustrative material from within the Geography Archive. Mainly, and simply, we want in these papers to acknowledge all Edinburgh geographers, staff and students, and to invite them to reflect upon their own experiences in the light of what is here presented.